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ON THE

USE AND ABUSE

OF POPULAR

SPORTS AND EXERCISES,

Resembling those of the

Greeks and Romans,

AS A NATIONAL OBJECT.

BY

S. A. BARDSLEY, M. D.

Vice-President of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society.

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Earl of Wilton,

with respectful Compts

from

the Author

On the Use and Abuse of Popular Sports and Exercises.

by S. A. Bardsley. M.D.

Vice President of the Manchester Literary & Philosophical Society

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Earl of Wilton's Copy with the Authors Writing on Back of Title.

ON THE

USE AND ABUSE

OF

POPULAR SPORTS AND EXERCISES.

HUMAN nature is so constituted as to require both bodily and mental recreation. This instinctive propensity to amusement in man, is sufficiently proved by the universality of the appetite, in every stage of life, under every variety of clime, and constitution of government. But the regulation of this natural propensity differs greatly according to the circumstances under which he is placed. The recreations and sports of mankind are therefore diversified by the influence of moral, political and physical causes. The means of gratification are various and complex: the end simple and uniform. To escape from the sensations which may be induced by too great or too little exertion of body or mind, and to enjoy the pleasure which sympathy extracts from the varied intercourse with fellow man, give rise

to that fondness for public diversions and sportive contests, so conspicuously displayed in the history of mankind.—The influence of physical causes, in regulating the nature of these diversions, may be readily conceived.

The hardy, strenuous and active amusements of the inhabitants of the temperate and frigid zones, would depress and exhaust, rather than enliven and invigorate, the residents of a torrid clime. Hence the supreme delight of the Asiatic consists in the enjoyment of those pleasures which are purchased with little fatigue of body, or agitation of mind. To inhale the grateful fumes of his pipe, and to foil his adversary in the stratagems of chess, or other sedentary games, constitute the principal part of his amusements.

Although physical causes necessarily circumscribe the sphere of man's active pursuits, yet they have much less controul than those of a moral and political kind. Man is endued above all other animals with a frame and constitution which can adapt itself to every diversity of clime and change of temperature. He can, in a measure, subdue physical obstacles, when powerfully stimulated by moral and political causes.—The savage, compelled to hunt his prey for food, has little leisure to cultivate his intellectual taste and powers.—If not exposed

to danger from hostile neighbours, his recreations are mostly of a negative kind.—He is happy when idle and at ease. But if he be stimulated by the prospect of war, all his amusements tend to accomplish him for carrying on successfully his military exploits. His songs are praises of the heroes of his nation; and his dances are connected with martial discipline. The public shews and festivals of his country are, almost without exception, of the character of savage war.*

According to the degree of civilization will the public sports and amusements of a people partake more or less of the mixed character of corporeal and mental recreation. A display of the arts which refine and gladden life, can only flourish where the condition of man has been long meliorated by the enjoyment of moral and political advantages.—

* The savage tribes of America furnish various proofs of the truth of this remark.——Likewise in Collins's account of the natives of New Holland, there is a curious illustration of the propensity of a rude and savage people to those amusements which are adapted to their peculiar situation.

Indeed the singular and ludicrous ceremony of initiating youth into the rank of warriors, at the celebration of their military exercises and games, is a striking instance of that disposition to amusement, which even the most savage and wretched state of life cannot eradicate.

Indeed the kind and nature of the popular sports and exhibitions of a people, whether just emerging from barbarism, or passing through the various stages of improvement, or arrived at the highest pitch of refinement, serve to measure, as by a scale, the different degrees of their advancement to the acme of civilization. The two most powerful and celebrated nations of antiquity, Greece and Rome, afford ample proofs of the truth of this remark. The shews and public sports of each of these nations, while they issued from their character and manners, operated on this very character and manners, and rendered them more ardent and permanent. This connection between the character of a people and their sports, was forcibly impressed on their legislators and rulers. Their public games were instituted for other purposes than mere amusement and relaxation. They were rendered subservient in Greece to the noblest views of legislative policy. Intimately connected with the whole system of government, whether civil, military, or religious, they had a moral as well as a political tendency. To promote ardor, emulation, friendship, patriotism and all the animated principles and connections of active life, the Olympic, and other solemn festivals, were in-

stituted. In order to investigate some of the moral and political effects of these popular sports and public games, which contributed so largely in raising the Greeks and Romans to a height of unparalleled grandeur, it will be necessary to examine the foundation of a system, which, in some respects, when freed from its worse abuses, particularly those which the more ferocious character of Rome introduced, may not illaudably nor unusefully be imitated by the most civilized nations.

Though it may, perhaps, be admitted, that the difference in the state of knowledge and general policy, in the ancient and modern world, will not admit of a close approximation in the system of their public sports and amusements; yet the principles to which the Greeks directed their attention in controuling popular amusements, deserve the limited imitation of every free and enlightened people. For, their aim was to direct to innocent and useful objects, two of the most powerful principles of the human breast;—the love of pleasure and the love of action. Hence arose the institution of the * gymnastic exercises, which formed the

* Lycon, according to Pliny, first instituted the gymnastic games in Arcadia, whence they were extended throughout Greece and successively contributed to the

principal part of all the solemn games. The gymnastic art consisted in the performance of bodily exercises calculated for defence, health and diversion. That branch of these exercises, called the athletic or sportive, must be considered as coeval with the formation of society.* The five † gymnic exercises, so accurately described by Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, and Pausanias, formed the principal branch of the education of youth.

To be enabled to excel in the performance of these, they were trained with the greatest

highest gratification of both the Greeks and Romans, in their private schools and public solemnities.

They were performed in the *Gymnasium*, where not only youth were instructed in these exercises, but also the philosophers taught their different doctrines.—The Palæstra, which formed a part of the building, was the school for the gymnic exercises.

* In almost every island of the great Pacific Ocean, we find a similarity, more or less striking, in the athletic and warlike exercises of the natives, with those practised in Greece.

† These five exercises were called Pentathlum by the Greeks, and Quinquertium by the Romans. They consisted of leaping, running, throwing the Discus, darting the javelin, and wrestling; but instead of darting the javelin, others mention boxing. The last exercise was combined with wrestling; and then took the name of Pancratium.——See Hieronymus Mercurialis, de arte gymnasticâ—and Potter's Archæologia.

care; and every means was employed to excite powerful emulation. Their object was, to recreate and strengthen the body, as well as fortify and exalt the mind. For, the firm organization acquired by perpetual exercise, counteracted the propensity to vicious indulgence, which a voluptuous climate naturally inspires.

They likewise infused a courage depending on animal strength and vigour, which was excited to the highest pitch among this warlike people.* Besides, the ambition of honest fame (the sure † reward of excellence in these sports and contests) taught them to controul the appetites of the body by the affections of the soul.

But the chief aim and end of the institution of athletic gymnastics among the more warlike states of Greece, were, perfection in the military character. Their philosophers inculcated this doctrine by their precepts and example.—Plato, in his book of laws, after having viewed

* Hac arte, Pollux & vagus Hercules
Innixus, arces attigit igneas.—Hor.
"Thus mounted to the towers above,
"The vagrant hero, son of Jove."

† Such as gained victories in any of these games, especially the olympic, were universally honoured, and almost adored.——See Plutarch's Sympos. lib. II. Quest. VI. and Potter's Archæol.

the high importance of acquiring bodily force and agility, adds, " a well governed common wealth, instead of prohibiting the profession of the athletic, should, on the contrary, propose prizes for all who excel in those exercises, which tend to encourage the military art."—And, perhaps no better plan could have been contrived to foster a warlike spirit amongst a people devoted to military enterprize, than the training of youth in these hardy and laborious exercises, and in proclaiming rewards for those who excelled in their public exhibition. If man were only destined to conquer and triumph over the weaker and less valiant of his race—if the lust of dominion were the only appetite worthy of gratification, then the cultivation of bodily prowess and ferocious courage would properly form the business, as well as pleasure of life. But man has a nobler part to act in society;—and enjoyments more pure, lasting, and better fitted to the dignity and character of his nature, become necessary to his well being in an advanced stage of civilization.—It may readily be conceived, that those arts which sooth and embellish human existence, and which depend on the cultivation of feeling and of taste, would be neglected by the Greeks, when only bodily strength, activity and address could carry off the palm of

victory. In the distracted state of the first settlers in Greece, when the bodily energies were constantly in action, courage and personal strength decided the day in most of their military conflicts. Hence courage became associated with every idea of patriotism, honour, and virtue. It is the opinion of Aristotle, "That the nations, most attentive to the formation of the body, strive to give it too athletic a habit, which injures the beauty of the shape, and stints the growth of the person. The Lacedemonians avoid this error; yet, by imposing excessive labour on the body, they engender ferocity in the mind, thinking this conducive to martial spirit. But mere warlike courage, taken separately by itself, is a doubtful and defective quality, and, cultivated too assiduously by the hardening discipline of toils and struggles, will degrade and debase the *man*, blunt his faculties, narrow his soul, and render him as bad a soldier as he is a contemptible citizen."* This necessity of rendering the gymnastic art subservient to nobler pursuits, was felt and acted upon by the Athenians, and other polished states of Greece.

The cultivation of poetry and music was encouraged by bestowing the highest honours

* Gillies's Aristot. polit. p. 250.

and rewards on those who excelled in these delightful arts at the celebration of all the public games. To such a happy combination of mental with corporeal excellencies, cherished and displayed under the most pompous and fascinating appearances in their popular diversions and solemn festivals, may the splendid achievements of this distinguished people be attributed.* Considered in the light of affording amusement, exciting generous emulation, and of creating robust and hardy citizens, endowed with energy to resist slavery

* Montesquieu is of opinion, that the want of employment for the majority of the citizens, compelled the Greeks to become a society of athletic and military combatants; for, he observes, "they were not permitted to follow the ordinary occupations of agriculture, commerce, and the baser arts; and they were forbidden to be idle; consequently, their only resource was in the gymnastic and military exercises."—But this assertion is contradicted by the practice of some of the Grecian states. We know that in Athens commerce was highly esteemed and successfully cultivated. This writer must therefore be understood in a restrictive and qualified sense, when he says, "Il faut donc regarder les Grecs, comme une societé d'athletes & des combattans."—Montesquieu de l'esprit de loix. liv. IV. chap. VIII.

The Pancratium, in which the antagonists voluntarily threw themselves on the ground, and annoyed each other by pinching, biting, scratching and every kind of savage attack, ought not to be endured in a civilized country.

at home, and enemies from abroad, the gymnastic exercises, with some exceptions, and under proper regulations, are worthy of the admiration and imitation of all free and civilized states. But there was another kind of popular sport, common to the less polished states of Greece, and which has been practised by mankind, not only in the rude and barbarous, but (to the disgrace of humanity) in the most advanced and polished period of civilized life. This amusement depended on the contests of ferocious animals, whose natural antipathies were made use of, and designedly enflamed to gratify a depraved and barbarous taste.—" They delight," says Lucian, (speaking of the Greeks,) " to behold the combats of bold and generous animals, and their own contentions are still more animated."—The savage ferocity inspired by the frequent repetition of such barbarous exhibitions, accounts in some measure for the conduct of the Ephori of Sparta, who, when they declared war against the Helots, ordered that the young bull-dogs should be employed in worrying these miserable slaves. To the Greeks may be attributed two barbarous diversions which have been eagerly adopted by succeeding nations. The fighting of cocks, and the diversion of bull-fights. The former was first

introduced by Themistocles, as a religious festival:—it soon degenerated into a sport for the gratification of avarice and cruelty. The latter had its rise in Thessaly, and was afterwards transported to Rome by Julius Cæsar.*

To Greece, Rome was indebted for almost every institution of popular sports and bodily exercises;—but the Romans carried them to a height of splendour and magnificence unknown to their first inventors. The Circus and Amphitheatre of Rome, exhibited, on a scale proportioned to the immense extent and power of the nation, all the popular sports † celebrated at Grecian solemnities. In their gymnasia, youth were likewise carefully instructed in the gymnic exercises, and likewise the athletic combatants trained up for public exhibition:—But the barbarous policy of the state, or rather the rude and ferocious manners

* See Pegge's Dissertation on Cock-fighting in the Archœologia—Brittan and Potter's Antiquities of Greece.

† The Ludi circenses, or circensian games, included all the diversions of the Circus, viz.—The Pentathlum, or Quinquertium, chariot races, Pyrrhic dance of the Greeks, to which were added sports of Roman origin.—The Naumachia, or sea fights, and bloody combats of gladiators, and the contests of ferocious animals with each other and with man.

of the people, gave rise to the alliance of bloody shews and combats, with manly sports and exercises. A gloomy and ferocious superstition, operating on the minds of a people inured, like the Romans, to foreign warfare and intestine broils, suggested the practice of shedding the blood of captives, as a grateful sacrifice to the *manes* of illustrious warriors.—This practice, at first a superstitious rite, became a ceremony of more pomp and ostentation at the obsequies * of distinguished persons. Hence the origin amongst the Romans of the profession of a gladiator—and when the people had once acquired a taste for bloody exhibitions, the detestable spectacle of gladiatorial combats was presented for their amusement.

The progress of cruelty and the danger of gratifying barbarous propensities, cannot admit of more striking illustration than what is afforded by considering the effects of these savage exhibitions on the manners and character of the Romans.

This is not the proper place to discuss the question, of *Right* or *Expediency*, which man

* The first shew of gladiators was instituted by Marcus and Decius Brutus, on the death of their father, in the year of the city, 490.——See Kennet's Antiquities of Rome.

has always claimed of rendering subservient to his wanton sports, the lives and feelings of the brute creation. It will come with more propriety under discussion in the sequel of these observations.—But it may not be improper, at present, to animadvert on the consequences of rendering bloody scenes familiar and amusing to even an enlightened people.

The frequent spectacle of * animals conflicting with each other in the games of the amphitheatre, gradually hardened the public mind, and begat a necessity for diversions of a more animated and dangerous kind.—Men were encouraged, and even compelled to enter the lists with wild beasts. At first, condemned criminals forfeited their lives in these contests. But these were not sufficiently numerous to gratify the appetite of a degraded

* In the shew of wild beasts exhibited by Julius Cæsar in his third Consulship, twenty elephants were opposed to 500 footmen, and 20 more with turrets on their backs (sixty men being allowed to each turret) engaged with 600 foot and as many horse. There were three sorts of these diversions, under the common title of Venation. The first, when the people were permitted to run after the beasts and catch what they could for their own use—the second, when the beasts fought with one another; and the third, when they were brought out to engage with men.——See Kennet's Roman Antiquities.

and licentious people. Men* were professedly instructed and regularly hired to sell their blood, like gladiators, in these bestial contests. Such enormities, great as they are, hide their diminished heads, before the supreme wickedness and cruelty of *gladiatorial* exhibitions.—When the susceptibility to humane and tender feelings became almost extinct by the bestial encounters, it became necessary to gratify their depraved appetites by the exhibition of human butchery and sacrifice. So lost to every spark of decency and humanity were this infatuated and ferocious people, that the highest ranks of society gloried in voluntarily taking a part in these encounters:—and even the softer sex, throwing aside every trait of amiable modesty and timidity, were ambitious of displaying their personal courage in these savage contests. This conduct did not escape the lash of the Roman satyrist.

"Cum———Mævia Tuscum,"
Figat aprum, & nuda teneat venabula mamma."
"Or, when with naked breast the mannish whore,
"Shakes the broad spear against the Tuscan boar."

Persons of every age, sex and condition attended these barbarous sports. The intoxication of the populace, from frequent gratifica-

* These were called Bestiarii.

tion, arose to such a pitch, that streams of blood flowed annually from several hundreds, perhaps thousands, of the wretched gladiators, throughout the various cities of the empire.—When the people had been so far steeped in blood as to prefer beyond any other these sanguinary combats, all the candidates for high offices bribed their favour, by outvying each* other in the number and pomp of these impious shews. Even the most powerful and enlightened minds among the Romans were tainted by the contagious influence of custom and the strength of national prejudice: Cicero, the humane and dignified statesman and philosopher, very faintly, if at all, disapproves of the excessive fondness of the people for this abominable exhibition in his time; and plainly expresses his approbation of the practice as antiently conducted. His words are, "crudele gladiatorum spectaculum & inhumanum nonnullis videri solet; & haud scio an ita sit, ut

* Julius Cæsar, in his Edileship, presented three hundred and twenty pair of gladiators—and Trajan, as averse from cruelty as the former, brought out 1000 pair of gladiators during a solemnity of 123 days.—But the sanguinary Nero, enlisted 400 senators and 600 knights (if there be not a corruption of the text of Suetonius, the historian) as gladiators, at a celebration of the Circensian games.—See Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

nunc fit: cum verò sontes ferro depugnabant, auribus fortasse multæ, oculis quidem nulla poterat esse fortior contra dolorem & mortem disciplina."—"The shews of gladiators to some persons may seem barbarous and inhuman: and I don't know as the case now stands that the censure is unjust:—But when only guilty persons were the combatants, the ear might receive better instruction—it is impossible, however, that any lesson to the eye can better fortify the mind against the assaults of grief and death." A ridiculous and inhuman assertion (an eloquent historian exclaims) admirably confuted by the bravery of ancient Greece and modern Europe.

Indeed so little was the practice connected with military ardour and true courage, that before its establishment the Romans were, perhaps, more distinguished for bravery, steadiness of discipline and contempt of death, than at any subsequent period of their history.

It is, however, certain, that in proportion to the frequency and extent of these bloody exhibitions, did the military valour and discipline of the Romans sink into a state of degradation and contempt.—"After subsisting a period of 600 years" (according to the remark of Gibbon), "Honorius gave the final blow to this inveterate abuse, which de-

graded a civilized nation below the condition of savage cannibals."

Rome justly suffered moral and political evils from fostering such inhuman propensities: Her existence was more than once at stake by the insurrection of the wretched and despairing victims of her barbarity. Besides, the corruption of the populace, through the medium of these diversions, was no difficult task to the powerful and wealthy. When man has been taught to subdue the humane feelings of his nature, he contracts an indifference to the purer and nobler virtues which fit him for discharging the duties of a good citizen. Indeed every habit that wears out the sympathizing sensibility of the heart, proportionably disqualifies man from exercising the pleasing duties and tender charities, connected with public and domestic life.

It would appear from this hasty sketch that the popular games and exercises of the Greeks when compared with those of the Romans, were better calculated to promote the social as well as individual welfare of mankind. The Grecian sports fortified the body and disciplined the mind, without injuring the one or brutalizing the other.

Indeed the superior wisdom of Grecian policy rendered the public diversions subser-

vient to the interests of the state as well as to the happiness of the people. The Roman government did not always neglect this branch of policy. For, their sports, in the early and rude state of the nation, were adapted to the circumstances in which the people were placed. But incessantly harassed themselves, or employed in harassing others, they had neither leisure nor inclination to cultivate those arts which contribute to liberal amusement: Ever occupied with warfare, all their amusements had a warlike tendency. The contests of savage animals and the conflicts of gladiators, suited alike the ferocious manners of the populace and the political views of their rulers. When the empire had subdued more polished nations, it might have been expected, that its amusements would have assumed a different spirit and complexion.—But the habits of the people were too deeply rooted and depraved to be easily changed—And, indeed, so far were their rulers from wishing to accomplish this reformation, that from corrupt and selfish views, they studiously excited the propensities of the people towards degrading and inhuman shews, by administering constant food for these savage enjoyments.

In the progress of civilization, since the downfal of the Roman empire, great and im-

portant changes have taken place in Europe, with respect to religious, political and civil institutions. The melioration of the condition of man in his social and domestic state, and the general refinement of his character and manners, have been the happy result of these moral and political revolutions. Yet still there remain sufficient vestiges of antient barbarity to throw a dark shade on the present state of improved civilization. The cruel sports still so highly relished in many parts of modern Europe, and which bear so near a resemblance to the savage contests of the Circus, exhibit lasting and disgraceful proofs of the relics of antient barbarism. Our own country has been but too justly stigmatized, even by her less polished neighbours, for the devotion of the lower ranks of the people to those amusements which are derived from the sufferings of the brute creation.

Although the resemblance (whether it be original or imitative is of little importance) between the cruel diversions of England and of Rome, may be considered a subject of just regret ; yet the similarity in some of the manly exercises and hardy sports, practised by the two nations, cannot but claim our warm and just admiration.

If we have retained more of the barbarous

sports of antiquity than the rest of Europe, there is the merit due to us of having more extensively adopted and practised those amusements and exercises, which inure the body to labour and fatigue, and inspire the mind with courage and emulation. In treating on the general character and spirit of some of the sports and exercises of the people of England, it will not be necessary to enter into particular detail. It is only proposed to hint at those of a popular nature, and which seem to be interwoven with the customs and manners of the mass of the people. They may be comprised under two heads.

1st. The sports which are derived from the animal creation.

2d. The amusements which depend upon bodily exercises and personal contests.

I. It cannot be denied, that mankind, at every period of society and under every diversity of country and government, have rendered the animal race subservient to their wanton and cruel sports. But the universality and antiquity of a practice, founded on inhumanity and impolicy, are inadequate to sanction its utility and continuance. If it can be shewn that barbarous sports tend to brutalize the human character, and are inconsistent with the manifest intentions of providence; the argument

derived from long custom and authority must fall to the ground. There is a sympathy implanted in our natures, which renders us feelingly alive to the pains and pleasures of our fellow-creatures, and is even extended to every part of the animal creation. Upon the due exercise of this principle depends great part of our social and individual happiness.—— Whatever then has a tendency to diminish the influence of this principle, ought carefully to be avoided. Now every single act of cruelty contributes its share towards the weakening or extinguishing the principle of sympathy; and by the repetition of such acts, according to the general laws of habit, * a diposition to cruelty is likely to be generated. If a child be early indulged in sportively tormenting *animals*, and this vicious propensity be suffered to grow up into a habit, his sensibility to *human* suffering will be proportionably diminished;—insensibility will harden into brutality; and at length he will not be restrained

* "The habitude which the people of this country (viz. Cape of Good Hope) necessarily acquire in witnessing instances of cruelty on human as well as brute creatures, cannot fail to produce a tendency to hardness of heart, and to stifle feelings of tenderness and benevolence. In fact, the rigour of justice is seldom softened with the balm of mercy."——See Barrow's Travels in Africa, Vol. 2. p. 41.

from positive acts of cruelty towards his own species, whenever goaded by the feelings of interest or of passion.—Hogarth, our great moral painter, has admirably illustrated the progress of cruelty in the human breast. The first stage of his Hero's career is marked by sportive and wanton barbarity to animals.—Upon this foundation crimes are soon erected; and at length grown callous to every social* and moral feeling, he closes his profligate career, by the perpetration of a deliberate and cruel murder. Another excellent judge of the human heart, Dr. Moore, has forcibly de-

* Such is the general impression on the mind of the power of habit to generate cruelty, that in most countries, those occupations which employ men in the destruction of animal life for the sustenance of human kind, are held in degradation and contempt. The lowest of the butchering tribe, in default of an executioner, is compelled to perform his functions in France and many other parts of the continent. There is an opinion prevailing in England, that butchers, and even surgeons, are equally disqualified, by the nature of their occupations, to sit upon juries, in trials affecting the lives of their fellow-subjects. This is probably a popular error; or, if true, yet a much more honourable reason may be assigned, why surgeons are not required to act in the capacity of jurors. Their office is to administer to the sufferings and calamities of their fellow-creatures—and it is fit they should every moment be disengaged and free to obey the summons to so humane a duty.

picted the effects of wanton cruelty to the inferior creation, in the character of Zeluco.—The feelings of humanity became stifled in this monster's breast, from an early gratification of his caprice and passion in sporting with the torments of the animal race. It is likewise our *duty* as well as moral advantage—to refrain from all acts of wanton cruelty to the brute creation. The organs of sensation in all the inferior animals, are evidently adapted for receiving and transmitting impressions of pain and pleasure,—and although deprived of speech, their groans and cries are intelligible indications of their painful feelings. Nor are animals less capable of expressing signs of pleasure as well as of suffering. This provision for the gratification of their several senses, is a sufficient proof of the intentions of the Creator. Like man, they were formed to feel and to enjoy. Here rests the foundation of their natural right to protection and humane treatment from mankind.

It cannot be inferred from this mode of reasoning, that animal life should in every instance be held sacred. The laws of nature and necessity demand from us the painful sacrifice.—Man must destroy life in order to live. Besides, we must consider that if man had subsisted only on vegetable food, the majority of the animal race which furnish his table would

never have enjoyed life. Instead of increasing the breed of animals, he would have been compelled to destroy them to prevent a famine.—But barbarously, wantonly and deliberately, to torture and destroy animal life, is equally repugnant to humanity, duty and the best interests of mankind. Experience teaches us, that the common sense and feeling of mankind, condemn that man whose greatest delight seems to consist in bloody and barbarous sports.—Youth, it must be observed, commonly inflict pain on animals in mere sport, without a due knowledge of the evil they commit. And the ignorant populace frequently err from the same cause. They are led to consider, but too often, from the connivance and even encouragement of their superiors in knowledge and station, that the animal race are equally indifferent to pleasure or pain; and only created for the purpose of gratifying the appetite, or contributing to the diversion of mankind.

If the question be asked,—"Whether all sports derived from animal suffering be entitled to equal condemnation?" The answer is decidedly in the negative.—For, although perhaps none can be completely justified, yet there is still a wide difference in the degree of moral and physical evil resulting from their practice. That class of diversions pursued for

the benefit of health and exercise, where the enjoyment of pleasure springs from the exertion of our active faculties, must not be compared with those depraved and cruel sports, which merely consist in the torture and destruction of the animal. In the present state of society, active diversions become almost necessary to the well being of the opulent and sedentary classes of mankind. Man cannot be happy without occasional active employment. He pines in the lap of ease and pleasure, and requires the stimulus of animated exertion.—Hunting in all stages of society, has therefore formed a principal share of the business and pleasure of man. But in this kingdom especially, a considerable portion of its inhabitants devote part of their time to the active and vigorous pursuits of the chace. And although it may be urged in favour of this exercise, that it invigorates the spirits, teaches men to despise enervating pleasure, and inures them patiently to sustain hunger, cold and fatigue; yet it cannot be denied, that it has a tendency, when too eagerly pursued, to blunt the sensibility,—to render the manners rude and coarse, and thus to degrade the dignity of the human character. The man of enlarged understanding, liberal notions and elegant manners, may occasionally call in the aid of the chace to re-

lieve the fatigue of sedentary employment, or renovate the powers of nature, exhausted by mental exertion, without much apparent injury to his manners or morals ;—but *frequently* to take pleasure in that, by which misery to animals is inflicted, if not absolutely vicious, is yet of no good tendency; it conduces neither to form the gentleman nor the man. If it be considered as too nice and fastidious a delicacy to impute blame to the practice of destroying animals for the purpose of health, exercise and recreation, it may, however, be allowed to call in question the policy and humanity of other diversions, once highly cherished, and still too much practised by the people of this country. Some of these national sports are sanctioned by the practice and encouragement of many persons distinguished for rank and talents.—That there should be found such abettors of the bloody and barbarous diversions of *cock-fighting* and *bull-baiting*, is both a subject for surprize and regret.—These two amusements seem to have survived the destruction of many other sports equally as unmeaning and barbarous; but that they should not have entirely yielded to the improved state of manners—or the interference of the laws, is a subject of just reproach to us by foreigners, and of deserved reprobation by the humane and reflecting of

our own countrymen. The reciprocal influence of sports and manners on each other, may be shewn from these and similar diversions, as practised in various periods of our history. A late ingenious and laborious writer* has described the ancient and modern diversions of the people of Great Britain, from the earliest authentic records to the present time.—This picture confirms the general truth of the position:—That as a nation improves in manners and civilization, it loses its high relish for inhuman and ferocious diversions. It is more than probable, that the sports derived from animal contests, such as bull-baiting, bear-baiting, and cock-fighting, are vestiges of Roman amusements introduced by that people into this conquered island. It is at least certain they were practised † in the early

* See Strutt's Diversions and Pastimes of the People of England.

† The Jongleurs or Jugglers, in the reign of Henry the 2d made a profession of training bulls, bears, and even *horses*, for the purpose of baiting them with dogs.—The sport of fighting cocks in pitched battles, first appears on record in the same reign. During subsequent reigns this sport became general; and, to the disgrace of our country, was countenanced by royal favour during James the 1st and Charles the 2nd's reign. If the Romans set us the example in devising these sports, it must be confessed, we have "bettered the instruction." For

period of our history. During the military enthusiasm of the middle ages, while jousts and tournaments furnished amusement to the nobility and gentry, martial exercises constituted the chief diversions of the body of the people. Hence arose the establishment of schools for teaching the "Noble science of defence," as it was called. These laid the foundation for professed gladiators, or prize-fighters.—The great prevalence of murder, robbing and every species of barbarity, in consequence of these proceedings, during the reign of Edward the First, compelled the government to issue an edict to suppress the

to English refinement and ingenuity may be ascribed the noble invention of the Gaffle or Spur; by the aid of which, the gallant combatants of the cockpit mangle, torture and destroy each other; no doubt to the great satisfaction and delight of admiring spectators. Another instance of our barbarous ingenuity must not be omitted. No other nation but the British has contrived to put in practice the *Battle-Royal*, and the *Welsh-Main*.—In the former, the spectator may be gratified with the display of numbers of game-cocks, destroying each other at the same moment without order or distinction. In the latter, these courageous birds are doomed to destruction in a more regular, but not less certain manner. They fight in pairs, (suppose 16 in number) and the two last survivors are then matched against each other; so that out of 32 birds, 31 must be necessarily slaughtered.—See Pegge's Essay in the Archœologia Britannica.

schools as well as the combats of prize-fighters.

During the reign of Henry the Seventh and Henry Eighth, these schools were revived in consequence of a supposed degeneracy in the military spirit of the people; and the baiting of animals at the same time became a favourite * diversion.

The Bear-garden,† during the 16th and the early part of the 17th century, was the place of rendezvous for the highest as well as the lowest classes of society. The Tatler, when treating on the barbarous sports of this national circus, and the comments of foreigners on the subject, adds, "I wish I knew how to answer the reproaches which are cast upon us, and to excuse the death of so many inno-

* Stephen Gossen, in the latter end of Henry 8th's reign, considers that our ancestors had entirely sunk into the lap of effeminacy, as may be proved by the following singularly quaint and alliterative style of abuse. "Our wrestling at arms is turned into wallowing in ladies' laps; our courage to cowardice; our running to riot; our bows, into bowls; and our darts into dishes."

† Another common diversion, during the period of Queen Elizabeth and in the two following reigns, consisted in several persons at the same time scourging with whips a blind-folded bear round the ring, whose sufferings and awkward attempts at revenge highly gratified the noble, as well as ignoble spectators.

cent cocks, dogs, bulls and bears, as have been set together by the ears, and died an untimely death only to create us sport." Bull-baiting was not confined within the limits of a bear-garden, but was universally practised, on various occasions, in all the towns and villages throughout the kingdom. In many places the practice was sanctioned by law, and the bull-rings affixed to large stones driven into the earth remain to this day, as memorials of this legalized species of barbarity. The regular system of bull-baiting seems to have commenced with the reign of King John. Its general prevalence since that period, until within a few years, must have produced important effects on the manners and character of the people. The misery it has inflicted on the harmless and inoffensive brute, is a matter of no small regret and indignation with the humane and considerate part of mankind;—but the injury done to public morals and social happiness, by an attachment to this degrading pastime is still more to be deplored. Numbers of bulls were, and still continue to be, regularly trained and carried about from village to village, to enter the lists against dogs bred up for the purpose of the combat. To detail all the barbarities committed in these encounters would be a disgusting and tedious task. All

the bad passions which spring up in ignorant and depraved minds are here set afloat. The torments and blood of the suffering beast are purchased by money of his unfeeling master; and the owners of the dogs are not more gratified in gaining their sanguinary wagers, than in applauding the savage ferocity displayed by these animals. We cannot often appeal to the annals of bull-baiting;—but if they were regularly laid open, it is probable that many instances of a similar kind to the following might be held up as a lesson to the abettors of such diversions.—* "Some years ago at a bull-baiting in the North, a young man, confident of the courage of his dog, laid some trifling wager, that he would at separate times cut off all the four feet of his dog, and that after every amputation he would attack the bull. The cruel experiment was tried, and with success." Such detestable barbarity can only be exceeded by the following recital extracted from the public prints of 1799. At a bull-baiting in Staffordshire, after the animal had been baited by single dogs, he was attacked by numbers let loose at at once upon him.—Having escaped from his tormentors, they again fastened him to the ring; and with a view, either of gra-

* See Bewick's Quadrupeds.—Article Dog.

tifying their savage revenge, or of better securing their victim, they actually cut off his hoofs, and enjoyed the spectacle of his being worried to death on his bloody and mangled stumps. These facts speak more than a volume against the sophistic arguments of the advocates for exciting brave and manly courage by the exhibition of bloody and barbarous sports.

Although persons of rank and education, at the present period, have abandoned bear and bull-baiting to the lowest and most despicable part of the populace; and even amongst them these sports are much less frequent than formerly; yet the practice meets with countenance in some parts of the kingdom, and has been supported not long since, in one of the first assemblies of this nation, extolled by men of rank and abilities, as encouraging harmless amusement, manly spirit and contempt of danger.

These opinions appear to be so much at variance with the present enlightened, liberal and humane state of society, that to hear they have been defended by serious arguments and with persevering ardor, is sufficient to excite both regret and astonishment. Cruelty in every shape is unjustifiable;—but wanton, deliberate barbarity is dishonourable to our

nature, and contrary to the principles of natural religion, honour, justice and humanity. Of all the cruel sports, bull-baiting, as generally practised, is, perhaps, the least defensible. It is not only a cruel, but a foolish and detestable diversion. That the spectacle of two animals endowed with courage, strength and activity, exerting their antipathies to each others destruction, upon fair and equal terms, should excite our curiosity and animate our feelings, is reconcileable to the constitution and nature of man; but that any human being should delight in beholding a noble and useful animal tied to a stake, and deprived in a great measure of the means of offence and defence, and then worried and tormented by dogs and men, is a sport so insipid, so unsportsman-like,*

* Throwing at cocks is another specimen of unmeaning brutality confined solely to our own country. After being familiarized to the barbarous destruction of this courageous bird in the cock-pit, it was only advancing one step further in the progress of cruelty, to fasten this most gallant animal to a stake, in order to murder him piece-meal.——This detestable barbarity has declined as our manners have become more polished and humane; but the strong hand of the law was obliged to interfere in many places to hasten its abolition. The cruel treatment of the animal race might well lead an ingenious †

† Wenderborn, on the character and manners of the people of Great Britain.

and so cruel, as to excite wonder as well as detestation. But the advocates of these and similar cruel diversions, exclaim in a tone of triumphant interrogation——"Do not these sports inspire manly courage and contempt of danger?"—Certainly not. They are only calculated to generate cruelty and a thirst for blood. They may, indeed, inspire ferocity and insensibility to danger, but they are unfit to impart genuine and manly fortitude.

The Romans indulged, as before remarked, in these savage diversions to a greater extent than any other nation of antiquity; yet they did not excel the Greeks, nor have surpassed the moderns, in the display of military ardour and true courage.

It is a superficial and unphilosophical view of the subject, to consider the barbarous sports of Rome contributing to the establishment of her power and military fame. These spectacles never became common till after Hannibal's defeat; and that the Romans, subsequent to

foreigner to remark, when describing our popular diversion, as follows.—"The women of Rome beheld barbarities and murders in cold blood; but the boxing-matches—the bull-baitings, cock-fightings, and the numerous attendance of both sexes at public executions, indicate that there is at least a remnant of Roman manners, and the taste of those times, left in England."

this period improved in valour and hardihood, is not recorded in the pages of their history. But may we not, with just pride, appeal to facts furnished by our own age and country? Has the valour, enterprize, or intrepidity of British soldiers and sailors shone less conspicuous, since the period that bull-baiting and other barbarous sports have declined, throughout most parts of the kingdom? The answer is recorded in the history of our late naval and military transactions.

The conduct of the Spaniards and Portugueze, when contrasted with that of our own countrymen, is a striking proof of the incompetency of savage and cruel amusements to create a courageous and warlike disposition.—Bull-fights still constitute the only active popular amusement of the two countries.—If these bloody sports were capable of inspiring active courage and manly fortitude, how are we to account for the acknowledged degeneracy of the people of Spain and Portugal in these warlike qualities?

The advocates for bull-baiting and similar sports, have recourse to another argument, or rather assertion, which they urge with great confidence: "Cruel sports," they contend, "do not necessarily generate cruelty in a people." "The English, (say they) who are

fond of these diversions, are, at the same time, less ferocious, and indeed hold the shedding of human blood more in abhorrence than any other nation on the face of the globe." Granted that we really deserve this honourable distinction—Does it follow that human nature is differently constituted in England to what it is in other parts of the world? Can it be necessary to prove, that habits of indifference to human suffering are acquired by repeated acts of cruelty to brutes; and that the sympathy of our natures must be blunted in proportion to our familiarity with scenes of unnecessary and wanton barbarity? These are almost self-evident suppositions; at least they are such inductions from daily and repeated experience, as to pass current for intuitive truths.—But if we admit that the English are more addicted to cruel sports, and yet hold human life more sacred than the people of other countries, it by no means follows, that such sports have not a tendency to create a disposition to cruelty.—How then are we to reconcile this apparent contradiction? The paradox, if there really be any, is not difficult of solution.

The life of man is always most respected, where it is of most consequence. For, in a country like Britain, where the whole body of the people enjoy political and civil rights, their

own importance, and that of their fellow-citizens will be felt and esteemed; and where just and equal laws protect the life and property of the meanest of the people, and consequently private injuries can be redressed by an appeal to the tribunals of justice, man will be less disposed to be the avenger of his own wrongs.—Besides, ignorance is commonly the parent of cruelty. Now it may be safely asserted, that the knowledge of man's duties both towards his neighbour and his Creator, are better understood and more widely diffused amongst the mass of the people in this kingdom, than in those otherwise civilized countries, where a thirst for the blood of their fellow-creatures seems chiefly to prevail. These eminent moral and political advantages are the powerful counteracting causes of that spirit of barbarism which cruel diversions are calculated to excite. If it be desirable then to efface the harsh lineaments of rudeness, and a want of feeling nearly allied to brutality, which still mar the otherwise fair visage of the national character, let all barbarous diversions be entirely abolished; but especially let the sport of bull-baiting be the first offering to be sacrificed at the shrines of humanity and justice! "A diversion," to speak of it in the

language of a justly celebrated * orator, " which may be characterised as inhuman, cruel, disgraceful and beastly, and which can excite nothing but brutality, ferociousness and cowardice: For, its direct tendency is to debase the mind, deaden the feelings, and extinguish every spark of benevolence."

II. The amusements which depend on bodily exercises and personal contests.

It is not compatible with the limits of this essay to notice the variety of bodily exercises and active sports to which the people of England are generally addicted.—But there is one kind of personal contest, to the consideration of which the remaining part of these remarks will be chiefly devoted, as it has been the source of obloquy and reprobation among foreigners, to the national character. The public exhibition of boxing, and the practice of the same art in deciding private and personal quarrels, are here alluded to.

The exhibition of pugilism on a public stage, is most probably a relic of one species of the Roman gymnastic. This mode of venal stage-fighting is a barbarous prostitution of a manly and useful art, whether considered as an ex-

* Sheridan:—Parliamentary Debates on the Abolition of Bull-baiting, &c.

ercise calculated to inspire fortitude and intrepidity, or to afford efficacious means of defence against personal insult and violence. But when considered merely in the light of yielding gratification as a public spectacle, or of furnishing an opportunity for gambling speculations, it is then viewed in all its naked deformity—Yet, is not the art of boxing, by which instantaneous insult may be avenged, or personal injury averted, less dangerous than any other practice adopted by the inhabitants of the continent on similar occasions and for similar purposes?—The question is an important one; and the following facts and observations may serve, perhaps, to apologize for, if they cannot justify, a custom so interwoven with our national manners and character.

So long as man is subject to the imperfection of his nature, he must be compelled to acquire the art of self-defence, as well as that of annoyance to others. Our experience of his conduct and character, teaches us the impossibility of extinguishing the passions of pride and resentment, which, although they frequently involve him in misery, are still the sources of some of his noblest qualities and attributes.—As some portion of evil will attach to the best and wisest system of moral or civil restraint; that policy is, perhaps, the wisest,

which legislates for man as he is, not altogether as he ought to be.—Suffer the passions to reign uncontrouled, and you dissolve the bonds of society: stifle the active energies of a resolute independent spirit, and you degrade the man into a passive slave. The feeling of resentment for unprovoked injury and insult is a salutary, if not instinctive provision of our common nature. It may be asked—"Is man then to be the judge and avenger of his own wrongs? Is not every offence against the person of a citizen a breach of the laws of society? and should it not be punished as such?"——Certainly:—But if in the best regulated states, it be found impracticable to prevent man from frequently asserting a claim to the vindication of his own real or supposed wrongs, it then becomes a question of *expediency* as to the most preferable mode by which he may be enabled to obtain this end. Boxing may not unjustly be considered as the most eligible means of offence and defence. It is properly ranked among those athletic exercises, which, at the same time that they impart address and strength to the body, inspire courage and fortitude in the mind. It may indeed lead *bad* hearts and *bad* heads into acts of presumption and petty tyranny; but this propensity to an improper exertion of skill and courage would

be checked, in proportion as men were more *equally* possessed of the means of defence or aggression.—They would learn to respect the skill and bravery of each other, and consequently be less prone to undue resentment and quarrels. The government that would attempt, with a despotic and severe authority, to controul the exertions of self-confidence, and a moderate exercise of just resentment, could only expect to rule over a nation of timid and revengeful slaves. The open and ingenuous expression of manly indignation might be repressed; but the rancorous feelings of malignant revenge would be fostered and encouraged. But no state can, with any prospect of success, attempt such an absolute dominion over the passions of men. And if it did, "it must (according to the observation of a spirited author) in order to act consistently, prohibit the use of knives, hatchets, and even pokers; for any of these, upon a sudden emergency, might impart a fearful power to the enraged and the feeble."

If we consider the practice of other countries, where boxing is unknown, we shall find, that the modes of resenting injuries, resorted to by the common people, are full of danger and fe-

rocity. In * Italy, the stiletto is not only the weapon of the hired assassin, but is also kept ready in the bosom of the respectable citizen, to be plunged into the heart of his friend or neighbour, upon any sudden provocation from anger, or motive of revenge.

When the passions are under greater restraint, from the influence of laws, of climate and of custom, such dreadful consequences do not ensue from the quarrels of the populace.† Yet even in France, and most parts of Germany, the quarrels of the people are determined by a brutal appeal to force, directed in

* In an authentic publication of the life of the late Pope, it is affirmed, that upwards of 1000 persons annually fall victims in Rome to the stiletto; either by the hands of the hired assassin, or in private quarrels. Dr. Moore reckons the number of murders in Naples, by the dagger, at not less than 400 annually.

† The mode of fighting in Holland, among the seamen and others, is well known by the appellation of Snicker-Snee. In this contest sharp knives are used; and the parties frequently maim, and sometimes, destroy each other.—The government deems it necessary to tolerate this savage practice—Certain fines are imposed if wounds be inflicted on dangerous parts of the body; but a very trifling, and indeed seldom any punishment ensues, provided the general rules of the combat have been adhered to.

any manner, however perilous, to the annoyance or destruction of an adversary. Sticks, stones and every dangerous kind of weapon, are resorted to for the gratification of passion or revenge. But the most common and savage method of settling quarrels upon the continent is the adoption of the Pancratium. The parties close, and struggle to throw each other down; at the same time the teeth and nails are not unemployed. In short, they tear * each other like wild beasts, and never desist from the conflict till their strength is completely exhausted; and thus regardless of any established laws of honour which teach forbearance to a prostrate foe, their cruelty is only terminated by their inability to inflict more mischief. And yet superficial observers, and especially all foreigners who have written concerning our customs and manners, loudly brand the English

* In Virginia and the other southern states of America, the most savage acts of barbarity are committed, in the quarrels of the people. Gouching—or thrusting out the eye from the socket, is one of the means resorted to upon almost every personal dispute. An intelligent traveller, Mr. Weld, declares, that at Richmond in Virginia, it was nothing uncommon to meet with persons deprived of one or both eyes from this horrid practice.—He mentions another mode to disable an antagonist, so detestably barbarous, as to excite incredulity, if the account had not been corroborated by other writers.

character with savage rudeness and brutality, because they have seen men terminate their quarrels by an appeal to boxing;—in which the parties are not permitted to take an unfair advantage of each other, but when one is disposed to yield, the combat immediately closes, and the conqueror and the vanquished are often seen to give and receive a hearty shake of the hand, in token of mutual good will and forgiveness. In no instance does the manly, spirited and generous character of Britons, rise to a higher pitch, than in this alacrity almost universally shewn by the most ingorant and lowest order of the people, to terminate their personal contests, in a kindly and honourable manner.—The mind indeed is thus relieved at once from the brooding mischief of malice and revenge. For, when the idea of self-consequence has been maintained, in courageously supporting the contest, man is better satisfied with himself and others, and consequently more likely to dismiss his ill-will and resentments.—In order to foster manly fortitude and vigour, and to prevent the mischiefs arising from the irregular and brutal exertions of strength and ferocity—would it not be advisable to encourage the art of boxing with mufflers, as a subordinate branch of the gymnastic exercises? All *stage* exhibitions of

prize-fighting ought to be rigidly prohibited; nor should men ever be suffered to prostitute their strength and valour for the sordid purpose of gain.

It is a singular though striking fact, that in those parts of the kingdom where the generous and manly system of pugilism is least practised, and where, for the most part, all personal disputes are decided by the exertion of savage strength and ferocity—a fondness for barbarous and bloody sports is found to prevail. In some parts of Lancashire *bull-baiting* and *man-slaying* are common practices. The knowledge of pugilism as an art is, in these places, neither understood nor practised. There is no established rule of honour to save the weak from the strong, but every man's life is at the mercy of his successful antagonist. The object of each combatant in these disgraceful contests, is, to throw each other prostrate on the ground, and then with hands and feet, teeth and nails, to inflict, at random, every possible degree of injury and * torment.—This is not

* A disgusting instance of this ferocious mode of deciding quarrels, was not long since brought forward at the Manchester sessions.—It appeared in evidence, that two persons, upon some trifling dispute, at a public-house, agreed to lock themselves up in a room with the landlord and "fight it out" according to the Bolton method.—This contest lasted a long time, and was only terminated

an exaggerated statement of the barbarism still prevailing in many parts of this kingdom.—The county assizes for Lancashire afford too many convincing proofs of the increasing mischiefs arising from these savage and disgraceful combats.

The Judges, on these occasions, have frequently declared in the most solemn and impressive charges to the Grand Jury, that the number of persons indicted for murder, or manslaughter, in consequence of the bestial mode of fighting practised in this county, far exceeded that of the whole Northern † circuit;—and that, in future, they were determined to punish with the utmost rigour of the

by the loss of the greatest part of the nose and a part of an ear, belonging to one of the parties, which were actually bitten off by the other, during the fight.—The sufferer exhibited at the trial, part of the ear so torn off; and when asked by the counsel, what had become of that part of his nose which was missing—he replied—with perfect naivete—"That he believed his antagonist had swallowed it!!" It has happened to the writer of these remarks to witness, in more than one instance, the picking up in the streets, lacerated portions of ears and fingers, after these detestable and savage broils. Surely either our laws or manners might interfere in suppressing such deeds of savage barbarity!

† At one assizes, no less than nine persons were convicted of manslaughter, originating from these disgraceful encounters.

law, offenders of this description.—But, alas! these just denunciations have little availed.—Is it not then highly probable, that the evil which the severity of the law has been unable to correct, might be gradually and effectually abolished, or at least greatly mitigated, by the encouragement of a more manly, and less dangerous mode of terminating the quarrels of the populace?—In the Southern parts of this kingdom very rarely (and then chiefly in pitched battles for gain) is there any danger to life or limb from the practice of fair boxing.—If then in the public schools and large manufactories of Lancashire, where immense numbers of boys are under the entire controul of their masters and employers, some pains were taken to introduce the manly system of boxing, and the laws of honour, by which it is regulated, there can scarcely be room to doubt, but that the life of man would be more respected—barbarous propensities subdued, and the present character of the county rescued from the stigma of savage rudeness. It has been asserted, by those qualified to judge, that since the late diffusion of the knowledge of the pugilistic art by itinerant practitioners among the Northern inhabitants of this kingdom, the mere exertions of brutal strength and ferocity have somewhat fallen into disuse,

both as exercises of pastime, as well as means of offense and defence. In order therefore to abolish all traces of the savage mode of contest which has been so fully described, would it not be advisable to hold forth prizes, at wakes and public amusements, (where the populace assemble chiefly for the purpose of diversion and pastime) for the encouragement of those, who excelled in sparring with mufflers?— This trial of skill, force and agility (which was at first the practice of the antients) would contribute, *under due regulations*, to invigorate the body and animate the courage; and effectually abolish the present dangerous and inhuman method of deciding personal contests.